View metadata, citation and similar papers at core.ac.uk

brought to you by CORE

provided by Digital Commons @ American University Washington College of Law

Sustainable Development Law & Policy

Volume 14 | Issue 1 Article 1

Editor's Note

Veronica Kennedy
American University Washington College of Law

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.wcl.american.edu/sdlp

 Part of the Environmental Law Commons

Recommended Citation
Kennedy, Veronica. "Editor's Note." Sustainable Development Law & Policy 14, no. 1 (2014): 2.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Washington College of Law Journals & Law Reviews at Digital Commons @ American University Washington College of Law. It has been accepted for inclusion in Sustainable Development Law & Policy by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ American University Washington College of Law. For more information, please contact fbrown@wcl.american.edu.

Editor's Note

In the 1970s, Barry Commoner, Paul Ehrlich, and John Holdren—preeminent scientists who helped spur the modern environmental movement—created a simple equation to determine human environmental impact: impact (I) is equal to the product of population (P), affluence (A), and technology (T).[1] More specifically, the population of an area multiplied by its consumption per capita and the resource requirements of creating, transporting, and disposing of the goods and services that make up the population's consumption equals that population's environmental impact. As such, to merely maintain the rate of our impact on the environment as population grows, our consumption must decrease and/or we must create, use, and dispose of technology more efficiently.

The IPAT equation has justifiably been criticized as overly simplistic because population, affluence, and technology are not mutually exclusive factors. For example, if a technology, like a cell phone, is created using half the natural resources, the environmental impact is not necessarily reduced by half if that increase in efficiency also reduces the price of the cell phone spurring increased consumption by the population. Population, affluence, and technology are nonetheless important factors to consider when molding environmental policies and law to improve sustainable development across the globe. Although imperfect, this equation still provides significant insight into the basic roots of current environmental problems.

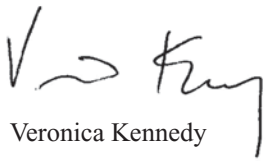
In this latest issue of *Sustainable Development Law and Policy*, our article authors highlight the influence of the IPAT factors on law and policy and the influence of law and policy on these factors. Professor Hardaway's article, *As the World Welcomes its Seven Billionth Human: Reflections and Population, Law, and the Environment*, is the focal point of this issue, highlighting each factor of the IPAT formula and the overwhelming impact population has on the environment.

Two articles, *U.S. Food Aid Reform through Alternative Dispute Resolution* by Ms. Griswold and *Indonesia's Role in Realizing the Goals of ASEAN's Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution* by Mr. Jerger, take an international look at policies that can be used today to reduce environmental impacts created by problematic consumption that is dependent on population and technology, respectively.

Case-study specific articles, *How Environmental Review Can Generate Car-Induced Pollution: A Case Study* and *Laplace Rising: The Story of How a Tiny Community in Southern Louisiana Will Save the Largest Delta in North America* by Professor Lewyn and Mr. Hudson, respectively, have a domestic U.S. focus. Professor Lewyn's article analyzes how a well-intentioned statute has triggered increased consumption worsening New York State's impact on the environment, while Mr. Hudson's article highlights how poor implementation policies related to improved technology wreaked havoc on a small town in Louisiana.

As each attempts to analyze an IPAT variable, these articles illustrate just how complex the human impact on the environment is and how challenging it can be to create, follow, and correct the laws and policies we adopt to reduce that impact.

I would like to thank our authors for contributing intriguing work to the study of sustainable development law and policy. Their scholarship is an inspiration to us all as we search to understand how to improve our livelihoods and maintain a healthy planet. Lastly, I owe a debt of gratitude to my staff who works tirelessly to make this publication thrive.



Veronica Kennedy

Features:

1 *See* Marian R. Chertow, *The IPAT Equation and Its Variants: Changing Views of Technology and Environmental Impact*, 4 J. Indus. Ecology 13, 15-18 (2001).